



State of Wisconsin  
**Department of Health and  
Family Services**

Jim Doyle, Governor  
Kevin R. Hayden, Secretary



Bevan K. Baker,  
Commissioner of Health  
[www.milwaukee.gov/health](http://www.milwaukee.gov/health)

February 15, 2008  
**For Immediate Release**

Stephanie Marquis, Communications Director, (608) 266-1683  
Raquel Filmanowicz, Communications Director (414) 397-1614

## **Parents Encouraged to Vaccinate Children Against the Flu**

### ***First pediatric influenza-related death reported in Wisconsin***

State health officials and the City of Milwaukee Health Department have confirmed the first pediatric influenza death within Milwaukee County, and the State, for the current influenza season (October through April). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) initiated national surveillance and reporting of pediatric influenza deaths during the 2004-2005 influenza season. So far this season, CDC has confirmed 10 pediatric influenza-related deaths nationwide.

“Even though this year’s flu strain is considered mild to moderate, children are more likely to become infected and may experience more severe symptoms than adults,” said Dr. Sheri Johnson, State Health Officer. “Anyone who has not been vaccinated yet should contact their health care provider or local health department to get a flu shot since there’s still time to get protected.”

Wisconsin reported its first influenza case in November 2007. The season is anticipated to run until the end of April, so there is still time for the vaccine to provide protection from influenza. Health care providers throughout the state are indicating they have vaccine available.

“Unfortunately, very young children are at high risk for severe illness as well as complications of influenza infection,” said Paul Biedrzycki, Director of Disease Control & Environmental Health with the City of Milwaukee Health Department. “Flu vaccine is still in good supply within the community and it is still not too late to get vaccinated. It is important that parents, siblings and caretakers of young children get vaccinated and to have parents remain vigilant for symptoms and seek medical care early if illness is present.”

Influenza is a contagious respiratory disease caused by a virus. “Flu” illness ranges from very mild to severe cases, and in some instances, can cause life-threatening complications. Influenza symptoms can come on quickly and include:

- Fever
- Dry cough
- Nasal congestion
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Body aches / tiredness

Some ways to stay healthy and to protect yourself and those around you from getting the flu include:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based waterless hand sanitizer.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with your upper sleeve. If you use a tissue, throw it away after one use.
- Frequently clean commonly touched surfaces such as door knobs, refrigerator handle, telephone, or water faucets.
- Avoid being exposed to people who are sick with flu-like symptoms.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Eat nutritious meals, get plenty of rest and do not smoke.
- Use your own drinking cups and straws.

To learn more about influenza, visit <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/communicable/influenza/index.htm> or [www.milwaukee.gov/health](http://www.milwaukee.gov/health)

- END -